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An Educational Group

Self ego is that which sustains most of us - the childish desire to believe. We, gifted by God with voice to please, are creatures set apart from mere mortal men, yet doubt constantly assails us. Are we as good as we think? Do we have a right to the adoration cast upon us? And, most important, when our voices fade and we are old, will we be forgotten?

- Giovanni Martinelli

In my many years in the ballet of the Chicago Civic Opera Company, I worked in many performances when Martinelli sang and those glorious moments still wring in my memory. Those moments are not too far in the past - but only people of my age remember that great artist and the resounding wring of his voice.

That same thought went through my mind after that uproarious display of love and affection shown us at that overwhelming reception after the May 3rd concert. It was almost unbelievable the way people came out of the past (and from great distances). The reception was engineered by three major organizers - RUTH ANN KOESUN, BETSY ROSS DAVIS and JOAN EHEMANN STONE. There must have been an army of helpers besides - to have assembled this loving crowd out of a past of fifty or more years.

GILDO DI NUNZIO flew in from Atlanta, Georgia where he was on tour with the Metropolitan Opera Company. He wrote to us later - "This past Sunday was one of the most exciting and gratifying days of my life with only one flaw - it didn't go on long enough. You realize that I'd not been part of such a concert on either side of the footlights for many years. I was held in the grip of nostalgia really to the point of tears; but it felt so good. When I finally could see things in their truly objective light - it was like discovering your work for the first time. I

was bowled over by the art and superb taste of all your creations. And your art does not result from just your thorough knowledge of the dance - but is influenced so much by all the culture which you've absorbed through so many sources. We who've been touched by you - to whatever extent have benefitted from all you so willingly and unselfishly gave."

The audience, that day, must have been hysterical with all these people attempting to recognize friends they had not seen in 30 or more years. Actually it was not that difficult - people's traits and peculiarities only become more so with age. Of the old Opera friends RUTH PRYOR was radiant and bubbly - HELEN WARD more sedate and New Englandy - MARGOT KOEHE, still the glamour girl from Skokie - LYMETTE CORRIGAN a bit of old Ireland - MARY GEHR now a very successful artist - and greetings from RAYMOND WEAMER.

(Note - from now on I mention only single names as many of the readers have not kept up with the many marriages.)

The Children's Civic Theater crowd brought out the ones who are 'still going strong' - SHEILA and BILL REILLY both teach in Milwaukee - GILDO DI NUNZIO a conductor with the Metropolitan Opera - JAMES MOORE who returned to America from Sweden where he was artistic director of the Royal Swedish Ballet to head the Dance Department at Stevens Point, Wisconsin - YVONNE BROWN teaching Brookfield - JACK HAKMAN who worked on the layout of the Tribute Book - AUDRE DECKMAN who has been around the world a dozen times dancing on Cruise ships - and of course JOAN EHEMANN retired from the American Ballet Theatre.

The 1940 crowd from the Grand Opera House on Clark Street who mostly ended up in musicals beginning with "Oklahoma" and on into "Carousal", "Finians Rainbow", "Brigadoon", "High Button Shoes" and "Seventeen". Among them JAMES JAMIESON now with a successful school in Wilmington, Delaware - BETSY ROSS REILLY who was off in "Up in Central Park" with LOUIS YETTER (now completing a world vacation tour) - JACK SIEBERT, who ran the party with great charm, is now in the lucrative paper business but still a theatre buff. All the children's theatre group also ended up in musicals. Most of the boys at one time worked for BOB FOSSE. JOHN SHARPE wrote that Fosse once said - "One of the major regrets of my life is that I could not have studied longer with Stone and Camryn. The time I did spend with them was extremely valuable to me." JACK WARNER - the original show biz boy - who now talks in sums of six figures is a successful producer of musicals for bus and truck tours.

Of those present who began with us at the Old Grand Opera House - DOLORES LIPINSKI has had a colorful career and much traveled - CHAUNCE and HOLLY CONKLIN have a Dinner Theatre and produce musicals - ELLEVA DAVIDSON now a teacher in the Minneapolis area - KAREN ROSE back to teaching after raising a family of youngsters - BARBARA SEAVER still with her Birmingham, Michigan school and DONNA ROKNIK - I do not know what she is up to but she looks just the same as when she was on tour with us on our 1953 concert tour.

Of the younger group present who have more recently come into prominence LAUREN ROUSE a principle dancer in the Pittsburgh Ballet and in the fall will join the Joffrey Ballet - NANCY GLYNN a soloist with the Pittsburgh Ballet - and warm greetings from SCOTT SCHLEXER in the American Ballet Theatre.

In the American Ballet Theater group present - JOAN EHEMANN and AUDRE DECKMANN were both active with the reception party - with HERBERT MENDAL - Audre's husband supplying the wonderful wine for the reception - ISABEL BROWN, mother of LESLIE, ELIZABETH and ETHAN who are all now in Ballet Theatre - and with a very special nod to our God-son KEVIN - working

in Culver City, California in a directorial aspect of the movies. And BARBARA STEELE once in ABT now working on a career as an actress.

The "Stone Camryn - A Tribute" book will long be a treasure to both of us - it represents so much that is dear to us in our professional lives. Starting with our "across the water friends" MARY CLARKE, ALICIA MARKOVA, ANTON DOLIN, JOAN LAWSON, KIRSTEN RALOV, JOHN NEUMEIR, DUSTY WORRAL, LEO KERSLEY and FREDERIC FRANKLIN - a illustrious group. Our ABT friends represented are LUCIA CHASE, THE KRIZA FAMILY, JEROME ROBBINS, RUTH ANN KOESUN, NORA KAYE and HERBERT ROSS, NAOMI SORKIN, LESLIE BROWNE and ISABEL MORROW. And a lovely ad from the Chicago Friends of ABT reminding us and thanking us for seventeen dancers - most of whom were principals - who had their roots in our school. It is not possible to mention all the contributors to the Tribute here - that would mean another book. As JOAN STONE put it when she handed us a healthy gift check - "from two thousand friends of yours".

We do not mean to neglect mentioning our Chicago friends who have supported us in so many ways - RUTH PAGE the Chicago legend - ANN BARZEL our only dance critic and LORA ABORN BUSCK whose original music helped to make us the foremost creators in the use of Americana - if not the first - certainly the most prolific. And ROSEMARY DOOLAS in whose school we will spend our semi-retirement.

We are especially grateful for the great number of our adventurous students who had the gumption and spirit to leave the "Second City" and make their success in other areas - from Alaska to Saskatchewan to Florida - from Los Angeles east to New York and even to Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France and Italy.

As Mr. Stone so aptly put it in his curtain speech - "the closing of the school is not a sad affair because we have always worked at what we wanted most to do - and exactly as we wanted to do it."

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Excerpts from letters that arrived after all the shouting.

"This is to thank you for all you have done for Chicago - for me, and for the American dance scene generally.

Memory is such a great thing, not only can events reoccur but also feelings and atmospheres. And all this happening I think back over the time I have known you and the different moments when our paths have crossed."

Sybil Shearer

"There are a few precious persons who make early, lasting impressions upon the lives, and very souls, of young people and share with them the love of the dance, and the goodness of life."

Mitzi Hunter

"Chicago is losing one of the bright jewels of its culture."

Emily Preputin

"The impact of the teaching of Walter Camryn and Bently Stone will live long in their students."

Mary Joyce Lind

"It is through your work that I learned how to reason out a problem and arrive at a logical conclusion. A lesson of outstanding magnitude - your magnificent teaching is deeply appreciated."

Myra Halsig

"So my dear both of you, enjoy your well earned rest. I shall always remember my very happy visits with you, your marvelous work and above all your friendship. Without that my visits would have been only another lesson to give - instead an inspiration and wonderful experience."

Joan Lawson

"Never have two given so much to so many."

Joann Craig

"It must be a source of tremendous satisfaction to you both to know that, in doing what you have loved for your lifetime, you have made such an incredible impact on the lives of so many people. As if this weren't enough, to be so universally appreciated, must be truly wonderful.

Please know that both Dolores and I truly admire and love you and are eternally grateful for your interest and friendship."

Larry Long

"Anyone who has had the good fortune to have been taught by you both has an edge of confidence needed in the dance field - and life."

Oma Cowie

Written to Joan Stone:

"They both are dedicated men who have instilled many fine qualities in their students, including self-discipline with determination to accomplish the best one possibly can. Undoubtedly everyone was somehow benefited who studied there any length of time. And so I send them my warm greetings."

Karen Krych Casper

"Wynne Delacome, a Chicagoan, now dance critic of the Milwaukee Journal was relieved to learn that giving up the studio was of your own choosing. She had the highest regard for you and your work. You should indeed feel great satisfaction in that the dance you have fostered has been so far reaching. It has elevated the quality of dance immeasurably."

Florence West

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With all the joy and happy celebration there is another side to life - it too is part of our daily life. The past year has taken its toll among our professional friends that seem part of our family. They were ROYES FERNANDEZ, BARBARA FALLIS, NANA GOLLNER, PAUL PETROFF, ROMAN JASINSKI and our very own KELLY BROWN.

In this vein a strange happening connected with a dance divertissement I choreographed in the 40's - "Valse Cecile" a hilarious satire on a ballroom dance of the 20's. No programs exist of the first performances but I do remember doing it for a U.S. Bond show on TV in the State Lake Building on April 16, 1944. I danced it with JANET CAMPBELL up until July 16, 1950 and from then on with JEANNE SCHULTZ. With Jeanne it was mad and frenetic. The moment she heard laughter she lost her cool and went bezerk and I had to chase her all over the stage. I also danced it several times with RUTH PAGE - once at an Opera Gala and another time on a duo concert at the Civic.

Ruth Page and Bently Stone danced "Valse Cecile" in Paris in 1950. SHEILA REILLY and JOSEPH KAMINSKY also danced it at St. Alphonsus and at Interlochen, Michigan. But I always remember Jeanne who did it the most and was always mad as a hoot owl with me after her. The dance had been idle for several years when two phone calls within an hour of each other - one telling me of the death of Janet Campbell and the other from Andrew, Jeanne's son telling me of her stroke, which she did not survive. Jeanne Schultz was high strung and a likely candidate for a stroke while Janet Campbell - whose life was full of woe, hardly could survive her promiscuous youth - the bottle finally got her.